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ABSTRACT

Restructuring of the Florida education system calls for fundamental changes in curriculum and instruction, authority, staff accountability, reward and incentive systems, and the relationship between schools and others. Five examples of the current school restructuring initiatives were presented at the Florida Conference on School Restructuring: (1) restructuring for more effective teaching and learning; (2) restructuring for more effective leadership; (3) restructuring to redefine teaching; (4) restructuring to meet the needs of at-risk youth; and (5) Florida Department of Education's Summer School Enhancement Institute. Twelve school districts were invited to send a teacher, principal, and district administrator to present and generate recommendations for how the state could promote restructuring in Florida. An analysis of what has been learned from the conference is provided with recommendations for further state action. (SI)

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Restructuring Education: The Florida Experience

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Conference Proceedings
November 1988

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For further information contact:

Office of Policy Research and Improvement
Florida Department of Education
Knott Building
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
(904)488-1611: SC 278-1611

Restructuring Education: The Florida Experience

Conference Proceedings
November 1988

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FOREWORD

Education must keep pace with the challenges and demands of our complex, technology-driven society. The future of our state and country depends on the acknowledgement and acceptance of this reality. The nationwide call for restructuring the educational enterprise is an effort to enable our students to be prepared to survive and excel in an increasingly global marketplace.

Restructuring should be viewed as an active, participatory process that aims in a fiscally resourceful manner to enhance leadership, professionalize the teaching occupation, invigorate the teaching and learning process, and meet the needs of "at-risk" students. Restructuring is an ambitious endeavor which must be fueled by commitment, enthusiasm, cooperation, and a willingness to take risks.

The Florida Conference on School Restructuring this past November provided a forum for the theory behind restructuring to be translated into practice. Representatives from a cross-section of counties - large and small, rural and urban - described their programs and shared their experiences, both the opportunities and the challenges, as they worked to restructure their schools. Programs and processes varied greatly from county to county, but common to all was an enthusiasm about and commitment to restructuring education.

Twelve school districts were invited to send a teacher, principal, and district administer to present and generate recommendations for how the state could promote restructuring in Florida. In keeping with the spirit of the movement, we felt this "bottom-up" approach to generating state action and policy initiatives was important.

We have learned a great deal from our pioneers in restructuring in Florida, and we are pleased to share this document with interested readers in Florida and the nation.

Betty Castor
Commissioner of Education
Florida Department of Education

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

On November 28-29, 1988, the Florida Department of Education sponsored an invitational conference to bring together teachers, administrators, union personnel, association executives, university professors, business leaders, and lay persons to discuss their ideas, experiences, and perspectives regarding the restructuring of education. The two-day event was lively, provocative, and fruitful. The room was overflowing with people and enthusiasm.

The intent of this report is to provide the reader with an understanding of what is meant by restructuring and why restructuring is important in Florida. Examples of the current school restructuring initiatives presented at the November conference will enable the reader to understand how the theory behind restructuring can effectively be implemented as practice in a variety of ways, and equip the reader with resource contacts for additional information. An analysis of what we have learned from this collective experience as pioneers in the restructuring movement nationwide is provided with recommendations for further state action.

THE EMERGING CONSENSUS

The essence of restructuring is cooperation. Restructuring requires the building, at all levels, of a coalition of supporters who agree that "business as usual" will not move education forward. Schools, districts, and the state must collaborate to achieve fundamental change in the delivery of education based on sound and reasonable goals for student achievement. Policymakers must understand the reasons for and support the change if it is to be successful. Business leaders must lend their expertise and unique resources. Students, parents, and community members must feel ownership in the work of the schools.

The conference on restructuring demonstrated that just such a consensus in support of restructuring is emerging in Florida. One indication was the wide range of persons present - teachers, principals, superintendents, school board leaders, union leaders, legislators, district personnel, business leaders, university professors, educational researchers, and Department of Education staff. In addition, despite the disparate orientations of conference members, all agreed on quite a number of issues relevant to restructuring. Repeatedly the themes of mutual trust, cooperation, and risk-taking were evoked. Monroe County Assistant Superintendent Glynn Archer echoed the prevailing sentiment: "Some of us are smarter than others, but none of us is smarter than all of us."

Several other issues were consistently raised by conference speakers and presenters. Representative Michael Friedman described restructuring as "creating an environment" rather than "adding on" new programs. Similarly, Susan Traiman of the National Governor's Association (NGA) reported that her organization was not calling for reform, but massive overhaul in the structure of education that included fundamental changes in the areas of curriculum and instruction, authority, staff accountability, reward and incentive systems, and the relationship between schools and others.

Reviewing the outcome of a recent NGA field study, Traiman noted that restructuring efforts display similar characteristics across-the-board: long-term goals for change, the forging of a common vision, comprehensive and systemic change, and strong leadership from the district that encourages risk-taking and diversity.

Like Traiman, United Technologies (UT) Vice-President Bill Howden emphasized the importance of the individual. He described the restructuring that had taken place in UT's Pratt-Whitney division, and the subsequent realization that, in the business world "people are the only commodity that appreciates in value." Resistance and apathy towards restructuring among Pratt-Whitney personnel was overcome by lots of training, another familiar theme of the conference. Howden mentioned a number of parallels between restructuring in education and business - the priority on quality, the need for improvement in math and science education, the ever-growing place for technology, and the necessity of accepting change in the established authority structures. The concern of educators with accountability, said Howden, is already "ingrained in the business community." Thus, when the increased involvement of employees improved Pratt-Whitney's product, management learned a valuable lesson: "listen to the guy and gal on the line."

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM THE FLORIDA EXPERIENCE

The school restructuring efforts presented at the November conference bring to the forefront themes elemental to the five basic objectives of restructuring. Parallels between business management paradigms (e.g., participative management, Quality Circles) and restructuring principles are striking. The "top-down" decision-making model is out; "bottom-up" is in. Competition is displaced by cooperation and collaboration. Turf-guarding gives way to risk-taking. Accountability is integral. Trust is essential. The teacher is a valued resource. The student is a worker.

Restructuring is an exciting challenge. No simple "how to" formula exists, but the Florida experience can serve as a valuable learning tool and resource guide for future restructuring initiatives. Based on our collective experience, we have identified a number of elements of success and challenges to be addressed.

Elements of Success
• Decentralization of Authority
• Union Cooperation
• Participative Management
• Teamwork
• Training
• Teachers Helping Teachers
• Educational Research
• Instructional Technology
• School-Business Partnerships
• Risk-Taking

Challenges
• Incentives to Change
• Time
• Assuming New Roles
• Encouraging /Enabling Teamwork
• Teacher Preservice/ Inservice Education
• Using Educational Research
• Parent Involvement
• Accountability
• Money

Elements of Success

These elements of success were common to most restructuring initiatives:

Decentralization of Authority - Fundamental to restructuring is a decentralization of authority from the district to the school and an active involvement of teachers in decision-making at the school.

Union Cooperation - Most restructuring initiatives were negotiated through the collective bargaining process and actively supported by the union.

Participative Management - A "bottom-up" approach to management and decision-making is an outgrowth of decentralization at the school site. Teachers, administrators, other school personnel, parents, and students, when appropriate, have input as to the decisions that affect the life of the school - from budget to hiring.

Teamwork - Teamwork enables successful participative management. Team-driven management and decision-making incorporates a variety of valuable perspectives; decision-making is more reflective of the whole, and ownership is more widely distributed.

Training - Adapting to a new style of management, finding the time to assume new responsibilities, learning new and innovative methods of teaching and interacting with students, taking on new roles, and feeling comfortable and competent in team situations are among the challenges faced by teachers and administrators involved in restructuring. Properly delivered, research-based training is essential to ensure that these challenges do not become obstacles to progress.

Teachers Helping Teachers - Teachers are best able to understand the challenges, difficulties, and concerns of other teachers. Successful initiatives prove the value of using teachers as mentors and coaches to help other teachers who want to improve their teaching skills.

Instructional Technology - Now more than ever before education has the capability to meet the specific learning needs and styles of individual children, and it is the availability of well-designed and tested instructional technology that makes this possible. The Florida experience offers excellent examples of how instructional technology can effectively restructure the teaching and learning process.

School-Business Partnerships - School-Business Partnerships have been found to have multiple advantages, among them: Business leaders can help curriculum planners identify the vocational and academic skills and knowledge needed for successful functioning in the business world of today and tomorrow; Businesses can establish policies that enable and encourage working parents to be involved in their children's school experience; Businesses can provide internship opportunities for students, and for teachers; Businesses can lend their first hand experience with restructuring to support school initiatives. The return benefit of this involvement is competent individuals who are well prepared to participate in and positively contribute to the "real world".

Risk-Taking - Restructuring implies and involves fundamental change. Abandoning the old to experiment with the new is not comfortable at first; tangible benefits are not always immediate. Believing in the merits of restructuring, many Florida schools took the risk and committed to refashioning their methods. The results have been rewarding; the risk has proven worthwhile.

Challenges

Restructuring initiatives also present common challenges to those involved and affected:

Incentives to Change - What motivates districts, schools, teachers to do things differently? The status quo is comfortable; the rules are clear. Schools must be convinced that restructuring is in the best interest of the entire school community. They must be convinced that it is feasible and worth the effort. They need evidence. They need a case for restructuring. The Florida experience is demonstrating results in improving teacher morale and student achievement.

Time - In an already over-scheduled work day, finding the time to assume new responsibilities is difficult, but not impossible. Building in time, providing substitutes, and encouraging the more efficient use of time by providing training in time management are among the strategies successfully used to overcome this challenge.

Assuming New Roles - The process of assuming new roles is a challenge for both teachers and administrators; old patterns of behavior are often entrenched and most people are resistant to change. Training is essential, as is learning from the successful efforts of others (demonstration sites), and networking. Establishing trust relationships at the school and providing an opportunity to reflect openly upon the challenges of assuming new roles have been extremely helpful.

Encouraging/Enabling Teamwork - Restructuring is all about teamwork, but being a good "team player" requires skill and the ability to trust "teammates." Most people do not know how to work in a team unless they have participated in team sports. The Florida experience demonstrates that training in teamwork is essential if significant positive change is to occur.

Teacher Preservice/Inservice Education - As teachers expand their participation and assume new styles of teaching, it is important that they receive preservice/inservice education that will enable them to feel comfortable with the innovations taking place and enable them to make well informed decisions.

Educational Research - Current research information is the foundation of good training and educational activities, but only if it is expressed in terms comprehensible to the lay person. Working relationships with local universities can help facilitate efforts to translate educational research into practice and useful advice.

Parent Involvement - Current research reveals the significant positive role that parent involvement can play in a child's emotional and intellectual development. But, in today's world, the majority of adults work and often find that their jobs restrict their ability to participate in the school. School-business partnerships where businesses establish policies that encourage, not penalize, parent participation in school activities is a hopeful route to encouraging parent involvement in the school experience. Encouraging effective parent involvement in decision-making at the school site deserves greater attention in restructuring and strengthening schools.

Accountability - New accountability measures will become increasingly important as school and districts seek waivers of state and local policies in their restructuring initiatives. The key to success will be to design accountability measures that are consistent with goals to restructure the teaching and learning process which promote team work, applied learning, and the development of problem solving skills.

Money - Underpinning restructuring initiatives, especially the extensive training involved, is the challenge of finding funds. Incentive grants allocated by the Florida Department of Education are intended to encourage, not to mandate, districts to restructure. School-business partnership arrangements are also a potential way to acquire additional funds.

WHY RESTRUCTURING IS IMPORTANT

As our society shifts from the Industrial to the Information Age, Florida is compelled to examine the educational institutions that prepare its future work force. Because information is the strategic resource, developing the ability to conceptualize new knowledge and to apply information to solve problems becomes critical in addressing the needs of our educational system. Restructuring enables schools to prepare students to succeed in a rapidly changing world. If our country is to survive in a highly competitive global marketplace, our students must be given the skills to succeed.

There are five basic reasons why restructuring is important:

Number 1: Restructuring for more effective teaching and learning

At the core of the restructuring discussion is the assumption that there will be a fundamental difference in how education occurs in the classroom. Any explanation of restructuring should place a strong emphasis on changing the instructional process.

Recent research provides insight into how learning occurs. Learning is being involved and making connections; active participation is a precondition. It is important that students and teachers think seriously about important things. Individually as well as collectively, they must be able to solve problems. They must be able to use what they learn. This means that new forms of assessment will need to be used to determine students' ability to apply what they learn.

Refashioning instruction places major emphasis on relating instruction to the diverse, individual learning styles of students and recognizes the importance of teamwork skills. It is important that students learn to solve problems as members of teams; the development of effective teamwork skills is essential to the successful future work life of the student and to the future success and economic development of our state.

Advances in technology have significantly changed the way we can provide instruction. Instructional technology could and should be a major tool utilized in restructuring the teaching and learning process, especially in meeting the needs of diverse students and in involving students in challenging problem solving activities. Greater reliance on the computer to teach basic computation and reading skills will allow more time for teachers to involve students in group problem solving activities to encourage the development of critical thinking and teamwork skills.

Sophisticated advances in software development open doors to a new classroom world and to a myriad of opportunities for more effective teaching and learning.

Number 2: Restructuring for more effective leadership

Successful school restructuring is dependent on the efficacy of leadership. As we move into the Information Age, decentralization and deregulation become increasingly important for more effective leadership. State and district policies should reflect greater freedom and accountability at the local and school level for decision-making. A school restructured for more effective leadership would be expected

to meet certain baseline accountability requirements but would be responsible for devising its own means of meeting them.

As exemplified by the Florida restructuring experience, effective leaders know that the best way to lead is to involve others — to forge a "common vision" by inviting and encouraging all members of the school community to participate as a "team" in shaping a school's values, goals, and procedures for attaining those goals. Otherwise known as "participative management," this "bottom-up" style of leadership is the heartbeat of school restructuring.

Number 3: Restructuring to redefine teaching

> "Education is the only profession out of which all others must grow. Yet it is the profession which gets the least recognition for its contributions to society. Perhaps more of the best and brightest would consider teaching as a career if it were accorded the professional status it deserves."
>
> - a teacher interviewed as part of the Carnegie Foundation study on the condition of teaching

One of the most attractive hallmarks of a profession is the way professionals are regarded in the workplace. Professionals are respected for their knowledge and for their ability to exercise good judgment. Yet, as evidenced by the reported findings from a recent Carnegie Foundation study, teachers are feeling a significant degree of frustration about their perceived "powerlessness" in teaching and about the lack of "professional" regard for their occupation: More than 50% of the teachers interviewed in this study reported that they do not feel involved in decision-making and feel that respect for teachers is worse than they expected.

Restructuring to redefine teaching means changing the teaching/learning environment so that teachers function as professionals who are able to exercise their professional knowledge and judgment over a wide range of issues affecting students and the school environment. The extent of this range is broad: from making decisions within the classroom to recommending staffing structure; from helping to organize the school day to assisting with the selection of school personnel; from making decisions on the allocation of funds to selecting inservice activities. Teachers achieve ownership through participation and are more willing to be held accountable when they have some control over their professional lives.

Restructuring to redefine teaching also means changing the work environment so that the best and brightest want to enter teaching and the dedicated and competent are encouraged to remain in teaching. Salaries must be competitive. Opportunities for professional growth and development must be present. Professional development means teachers have the opportunity to serve in leadership roles within the school. It means there is time for teachers to work with each other, with parents, and with administrators. Professional growth also means that members of the profession, working together, take mutual responsibility for improving their own performance so that students benefit. Coaching, modeling, and education are paramount to teacher professional development.

The outcome of restructuring to redefine teaching should be improved student achievement, improved school productivity, and improved teacher morale. By changing strict role definitions, teachers, administrators, and parents can work to achieve this outcome in a professional, collaborative way within the parameters of goals set by policymakers. For this working relationship to function optimally, it is important that these three groups develop skills for working as a team of professionals. Training opportunities are essential, and successful individual district and school efforts should be rewarded and replicated.

Number 4: Restructuring to use resources more effectively and efficiently

A fundamental reason for restructuring in the business world has been to create more cost effective operations. As the cost of education escalates, it is important to focus on new ways of delivering education that will retain or enhance quality within the economic reality of limited fiscal resources.

The availability of new technologies creates opportunities to deliver quality education more economically. Industrial Age assumptions that there should be a teacher and classroom for every thirty students need to be re-examined as new technologies become available. As the role of the teacher changes from lecturer to instructional manager/facilitator, and as students become more actively involved in designing their own learning experiences, new and cost-effective classroom configurations will be possible.

It will also be important to mobilize additional human resources more effectively through expanded partnership efforts with parents, businesses, and other community groups. Perhaps our most valued resource - our students - will have greater opportunity to become more involved in tutoring and counseling programs which will have a broader impact at a reduced cost.

Number 5: Restructuring to meet the needs of at-risk youth

It is imperative that Florida restructure its educational system to address the needs of its increasing and diverse student population. The social and economic consequences of ignoring the needs of this population are incalculable. As Harold Hodgkinson pointed out in his recent demographic study, "Florida mirrors the nation...as 83 percent of the 20 million workers who will be added to the U.S. economy by the year 2,000 will be a combination of females, minorities, and immigrants."

While restructuring efforts have as their primary goal the best interest of all students, the needs of at-risk students require targeted efforts. Florida is faced with a serious dropout problem — a problem aggravated by the state's continuously growing and shifting demographic composition. It is important for our schools to provide programs which specifically target increased immigrant, minority, migrant, educationally disadvantaged, and limited English proficient students - those youth who studies reveal are the most endangered of experiencing difficulty with the school experience, succumbing to frustration, and eventually dropping out. The charge is mammoth, but effective and feasible strategies exist and should be disseminated statewide.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE ACTION

Restructuring cannot be mandated by the state. The role of the state in restructuring is that of providing incentives, offering training, evaluating, and disseminating innovative models and successes. The state should respect and work with professional educators in restructuring efforts to improve education. State and district policies should reflect greater freedom and accountability at the local and school level for decision-making.

The restructuring initiatives featured at the conference provide a sample of the educational innovation taking place throughout the state. These initiatives are consistent with the Department of Education's goal of promoting a climate of educational excellence in Florida. The following are recommendations for action at the state level that can facilitate local restructuring efforts:

Legislative

- Expand incentive grant funds to encourage and enable school restructuring efforts
- Provide opportunities for waivers of state policies that serve to constrain local restructuring innovations, while requiring local accountability for student performance.
- Continue the Summer School Enhancement Institute.
- Establish and fund a summer Institute for the Advancement of Teaching.

State Department of Education

- Review Florida statutes for regulations restrictive to district restructuring efforts, and make recommendations for change.
- Build coalition of support for restructuring between Department of Education units, districts, schools, community colleges, and universities.
- Serve as a clearinghouse for restructuring information.
- Provide training and technical assistance for restructuring initiatives on a request basis.
- Work with the university system to:

    a) encourage and disseminate quality research helpful to school restructuring initiatives,

    b) develop new accountability models for student achievement, and

    c) develop "Restructuring 101" as a course helpful to districts and schools initiating a move to restructure.

- Promote a "sharing success" program to spotlight model restructuring projects.
- Coordinate all pilot restructuring projects on a statewide basis, and develop a Florida network of advocates.
- Promote coordination of staff development for restructuring purposes through TECs throughout the state.
- Offer marketing, training, and support to encourage and enhance parent, community, and business involvement in restructuring.
- Assist in the continuation of the network begun at the November 1988 restructuring conference.
- Join the Education Commission of the States' Re:Learning project to link Florida's initiatives to a national network.

A Profile of Florida Restructuring Initiatives

Broward County's Coalition of Essential Schools Project

The Coalition of Essential Schools is a very exciting example of a partnership among a group of public and private schools and a major university. The goal of the program is to simplify individual school structures based on a new way to set and limit priorities. Imagine entire staffs enthused about teaching, entire student bodies motivated toward learning, four schools reaching for the same goal - this is a living reality in the Broward County School System at the four Nova Schools. Embracing the nine common principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools developed by Dr. Ted Sizer, teachers, students, parents, and administrators are restructuring the way schools operate on this complex.

The Coalition of Essential Schools is a partnership devoted to strengthening students' learning by reforming each school's priorities and simplifying its structure. Based on the nine principles espoused in Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School (Sizer, 1984), the Coalition of Essential Schools consolidates select private and public schools nationwide to work with staff at Brown University in translating the principles of the report into individually-tailored working models.

Progressing slowly with the philosophy that "less is more," the Nova schools have spent the last three years preparing for full implementation during the 1988-89 school year. Nova Middle School, for instance, began with a steering committee, one year of planning, five teachers, 100 students, and five academic disciplines. Teachers and administrators went to workshops at Brown University to learn the principles. They wrote curriculum and they formed cohesive, supportive work teams to carry through with the philosophy. Principal Sue Alvord considers the process "a relearning program...it's part of an approach that rethinks assumptions about management and work and learning."

Nova Middle School chose to make a commitment to five of the nine key principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools as described by Dr. Sizer in his book, Horace's Compromise. These five principles are the driving forces in the evolving program: personalization, student-as-worker, intellectual focus, mastery by exhibition, and collaboration. Decisions about issues related to these principles were made using a participatory management approach that allowed students, teachers, and administrators to work together on committees as equals. The emphasis, said teacher Marie Bodemueller, "is on self-esteem and honoring each person."

The implementation of the Coalition principles may take many forms. For example, three teachers might be assigned to work collaboratively on one course integrating art, English, and social studies. The objective is to integrate the disciplines, attending to the basic skills and knowledge required to connect the three. The principles enable students to develop critical and creative thinking skills, independent study skills, and an ability to utilize resources outside the classroom. An inter-disciplinary approach, team teaching, individualized lessons, small and large group instruction, projects, research, and an Essential Thinking Lab facilitate the principles' implementation.

This approach has produced problems along with successes. The most prominent hurdle is time - time to plan, time to cover the content, time to be with students. There is also a struggle with grading policies: How can we promote collaborative learning and still evaluate individuals fairly? How can we ask students to take risks and then have to evaluate them?

Despite these possibly unanswerable problems, it would be hard to teach any other way. Students have learned to read, think, and generalize in ways that go far beyond their peers of similar abilities. Students are willing, even eager, to investigate subjects independently and in depth. They have maintained high individual standards but have developed a sense of caring for each other as they help one another learn.

Faculties have grown along with the students, with teachers becoming facilitators of learning more than disseminators of information. Daily conversations and collaboration have broken the isolation of teaching. In the enthusiasm to increase connections among disciplines, Nova Middle School has remembered not simply to add content, but to heed its belief that "less is more."

Contact Person: Dianne Aucamp, Human Resource Development Director, Broward County Public Schools, (305)765-6335

Orange County's Team Approach to Better Schools (TABS)

The Team Approach to Better Schools is a process designed to bring teachers together to institute improvements in the school climate, programs, and/or facility. Initiated and piloted by Orange County's FTP-NEA association during 1986-87, TABS is a part of an NEA pilot project. Begun at Jackson High School and four other Orange County schools in January 1986, the project spread to three Seminole County schools a year later and since has been emulated by schools in Louisiana, Tennessee, Colorado, Kansas, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and the Carolinas. Although TABS is in operation nationwide, Florida schools have led the way in demonstrating its effectiveness in producing substantive school improvements.

Since TABS is essentially a model for developing collaboration, the cooperation of district level management, school administrators, and the teachers association is a primary criterion for successful operation. Faculty teams receive training from the NEA in team building skills, including such areas as effective communication, group decision-making, conflict resolution, and steps to creating planned change. Individual school teams determine a focus for their activities and specific goals for their schools through brainstorming, needs assessment, informal surveys, and other sources of data. The teams meet regularly at the school and work with principals and other faculty to carry out project plans. The local teachers association provides ongoing leader and staff support.

According to Jackson High School teacher Fran Burns, TABS "got teachers at Jackson to work together and with the principal to have more of a voice in the school." Participating teachers initiated a survey that revealed a primary concern with discipline at the school. Through a team approach augmented by training, teachers used release time provided by supportive principal Lester Dabbs to create a discipline plan for the entire school. Lockers and bells were also eliminated to reduce the sense of external regimentation. One result: in the first eleven weeks of the school year, only six students were sent to the office, compared with twenty during that period the year before.

TABS permits faculties to first identify problems that they wish to address or improvements that they wish to make, and then rise to the challenges they set for themselves. In the words of another Jackson teacher: "Our team approach to discipline at Jackson Middle School not only improved student behavior, but it drastically reduced referrals to the office and suspensions. The faculty became more cohesive, and students could see that we were unified and consistent in our approach to behavior."

TABS requires time and commitment, but the potential gains appear to be numerous. In addition to promoting a cooperative relationship between staff and administration, as well as between district and union personnel, TABS increases collegial support, relieves staff stress and isolation, promotes professional growth, and allows schools to tailor their improvement efforts to their particular concerns. Fran Burns described the essence of all these benefits: "TABS is about better communication."

Contact Person: Dr. Donald Shaw, Executive Deputy Superintendent, Orange County Public Schools, (407)329-1202. Rosa Pickett, Assistant Executive Director, Orange Uniserv, (407)298-0756

Polk County's Project SAVE

The immediate goal of Project SAVE (Solutions for Academic and Vocational Excellence) is to strengthen certain "essential competencies" of students enrolled in vocational programs. Ultimately, the program seeks to help students perform successfully in the contemporary world of work or postsecondary education. Essential competencies are defined as "critical thinking and problem solving as they apply to communication (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), math, and science". An innovative multidisciplinary approach is used, which coordinates efforts by vocational and academic teachers, counselors, administrators, community leaders, parents, and students.

The project emerged in response to some disturbing trends. Recently, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)-State Vocational Education Consortium and the State of Florida Education Division determined that the skills and competencies of secondary students finishing vocational programs were inadequate for the purposes of effective job performance in the contemporary world of work or postsecondary education follow-up. The 1985 SREB report, Ten Recommendations for Improving Secondary Vocational Education, emphasized the need to design alternative strategies for strengthening basic skills through applied learning in vocational and basic/academic courses. Subsequently, a consortium representing thirteen states organized to plan and promote pilot sites in each state and pool resources to develop curriculum for several courses such as Principles of Technology and Applied Communications.

Lake Gibson Senior High School was invited to be the first pilot site for the state of Florida. A steering committee composed of academic and vocational teachers, counselors, district administrators, and key administrators from Lake Gibson and surrounding junior high schools developed the actual project plan and named it Project SAVE (Solutions for Academic and Vocational Excellence). This planning process brought vocational and academic teachers together, eliminating distinctions based on subject matter. The fundamental task, according to teacher Sandy Harwell, was to "restructure courses to make them more applied and applicable." Principal Richard Lewis described traditional vocational education as a "key" which no longer succeeded in opening the doors that students wished to enter.

The Lake Gibson plan identified three needs: 1) to strengthen guidance and counseling for all students in grades 10 - 12 as well as in feeder schools; 2) to examine alternatives for increasing student motivation and achievement; and 3) to provide opportunities for joint curriculum planning by vocational and non-vocational teachers. More specific goals and activities were outlined by sub-committees for curriculum, guidance and counseling, human resource development, public relations, and evaluation. In August 1988, all-day planning sessions were held to prepare for implementation of an applied skills curricula, including courses such as Principles of Technology and Applied Communications. Interested students who did not meet selection criteria for the program were referred to a computer-aided remediation lab in order to become qualified for the project.

Project SAVE represents a broadly collaborative effort. In addition to bringing Lake Gibson's vocational and academic teachers together, local business and industry has been indispensable in helping to determine the level of essential competencies students need to prepare for the workplace. Surrounding postsecondary institutions and vocational-technical centers have also provided input on articulation in the development of a 2+2 program incorporating two years of technical preparation in high school with two years in a voc-tech center or community college. A grant received from the Department of Education was used for the development of a site plan, staff development activities, and consultant services. In addition, funds were appropriated by the 1988 Legislature to provide the Lake Gibson pilot site with additional personnel, materials, and equipment.

After one year of planning, the SAVE program currently provides instruction to 115 students; 86 percent of these students report that they would recommend the program to a friend. Public relations efforts are now being directed to both internal and external audiences to build a positive image of the program in parents, local school personnel, and potential SAVE students.

Contact Person: Ron Jeffries, Asst. Superintendent, Polk County Public Schools, (813) 534-2111

Broward County's School-Based Management

In 1973, following the introduction of the Florida Educational Finance Program, the School Board of Broward County initiated one of the first school-based management systems in Florida. The new system was designed to move decision-making closer to the individuals affected by the decisions - students, teachers, and principals at the school-site level. Significantly, it also required the trust and cooperation of the Broward Teachers Union and the Broward County School Board. According to Broward Training Coordinator Gayle Moller, school-based management has provided schools with the means to become more "flexible and creative" as well as responsive to local school and community needs.

Essentially, Broward's school-based management gives principals primary responsibility for budget, personnel, and curriculum decisions. Principals are allocated a budget based on full-time equivalency (FTE) funding and must operate the school within the confines of that budget. The system allows principals to make personnel and curriculum decisions based upon the specific needs of the school and the surrounding community. For example, exceptional student education programs and vocational programs can be scheduled according to the needs of the student population since the principal has control over the weighted funding for those programs.

Principals do not make such decisions in a vacuum, however. Parents and interested community members are involved in decision-making through school advisory committees. Each school, in turn, invites a parent to serve on an area advisory committee from which representatives are drawn for district-wide advisory groups like the Teacher Education Center Council and the district curriculum council. Faculty councils, composed of seven people appointed by the union and three others elected by the school staff, provide input as well. These communication networks have been integral to the success of school-based management in Broward County by ensuring that the interests of all participants are represented. Currently, the district is looking at new approaches to the professionalization of teachers.

Contact Person: Dianne Aucamp, Human Resource Development Director, Broward County Public Schools, (305)765-6335

Monroe County's School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making

In 1972, the Monroe County School Board introduced a new form of management based on the notion that decision-making in schools is best shared by the principal, faculty, and other school employees. The shift to school-based management in Monroe County was supported by the school board as well as the Superintendent and teachers union, and it fit the peculiar geography of Monroe County - the archipelago known as the Florida Keys. Separated by distance and water- and sometimes attitude and custom- schools were given lump sums of money to use as each principal and teachers' committee saw fit.

When school-based management went into effect in 1973, all schools were required to develop representative building-level planning teams, including at least two non-administrative faculty. There were no other restrictions on the membership of the teams, and the development of their structure became each school's first collaborative decision-making task under the new system. To aid them in meeting this new challenge, district administrators made a significant, long-term commitment to training. Principals and teachers received training in resource management, interpersonal skills, group dynamics, problem-identification, and the art of planning. Because both interpersonal skills and an understanding of group dynamics were seen as critical to sucess, a good deal of time was spent on intangibles like "learning to trust." According to teacher Dale Wogast, " trust was essential at the building level," because often people "were required to let go" of previous roles and assumptions.

Since 1973, a greater commitment and willingness to make the system work has evolved in all of Monroe County's schools. Individuals who had previously been permitted only limited input became empowered. Many of these persons developed an understanding of the larger picture that they had not had the opportunity to see before. What emerged was clearly a better management system - one that produced tangible results like improved test scores and greater morale among teachers. The personal investment that school employees have in their schools has made for an improved school climate overall. Teacher JoAnn Carter reported, "Teachers feel appreciated because their guidance is sought," Representing 16 teachers, she brings any problems to the building-level planning team. "Even after all these years," she noted, "I still find it a very exciting place to be."

Contact Person: Glynn Archer, Assistant Superintendent, School Board of Monroe County, (305)296-6523

Dade County's School-Based Management/ Shared Decision-Making

The first stirrings of Dade County's "professionalization of teaching movement" appeared in 1973, with the advent of a working relationship between Dade County Public Schools and the United Teachers of Dade. Since that time, Dade has embarked on a far-reaching restructuring effort based on a "bottom-up" approach to management. Thirteen different projects, among them Satellite Learning Centers and Saturday Morning Schools, have drawn international attention. Most fundamental to the professionalization movement in Dade, however, is an approach known as school-based management/shared decision-making (SBM/SDM). Begun as a pilot project in September 1987 after one year of planning, SBM/SDM has given Dade schools the option of developing unique, self-tailored approaches to education.

The initial schools involved faced great challenges and vast opportunities. According to principal Pat Parham, the participants in the pilot project were told "to dream, take risks, imagine, trust, be accountable." The first order of business was to "change our own attitudes...and to recognize something good in even the weakest link." Training was provided to help participants learn the sorts of skills and procedures that make shared decision-making work. In the process, reported Parham, "everyone was strengthened."

Because decision-making is decentralized from the district to the school level, SBM/SDM provides schools with unprecedented control over how money is spent, staff is allocated, and instruction is organized. In addition, the district encourages schools to break old molds and create new opportunities. Principals, staff, and teachers join together to solve problems and develop new and creative projects that will meet the needs of students and be exciting as well. In this way, varying aspects of schools have been redesigned - the kinds of textbooks being used, the structure of the school day, the delivery of Spanish instruction, the way teachers are hired.

The success of the initiative is clearly a product of cooperation at many levels. The school board and union, for example, agreed at the outset to waive district regulations and contract provisions standing in the way of educational change. With such reduced regulatory control, teachers have been more inclined to devote their time and energy to shaping their work environments.

Dade's SBM/SDM schools receive the same funds as non-SBM/SDM schools. SBM/SDM schools do not report to area superintendents, but are rather organized into "feeder patterns" of elementary, middle, and high schools with one "lead principal," Through restructuring of the traditional system, however, teachers have greater opportunities for continued professional growth, and students are reaching higher levels of achievement due to their exposure to a higher caliber of instruction. Teachers participating in the "movement" describe themselves as "rejuvenated" and "more professional," and schools are experiencing significant improvements in student achievement, discipline, and curriculum and lesson planning.

Contact Person: Dr. Frank Petruzielo, Associate Superintendent, Bureau of Professionalization Programs and Operations, Dade County Public Schools, (305) 376-1470

Pinellas County's Teacher Empowerment and Educational Improvement

According to Assistant Superintendent Howard Hinesley, Pinellas County has long enjoyed good relations between teachers and administrators. This history of trust and cooperation formed the groundwork upon which the just-ratified three-year FTP-NEA contract was built. Included in this latest contract is "empowerment language," in a section entitled "Teacher Empowerment and Educational Improvement." This empowerment language is a vehicle for school-based management, permitting schools to implement site-based decision-making if they so choose. A consensus of at least 75 percent of the staff is all that is required for a school to take up the new system. Once agreed upon by this majority, schools can step outside current contract language so long as basic state and local requirements are met.

The option to restructure the decision-making process in Pinellas schools that is contained in the new contract has its roots in a pilot project initiated in 1987. As the result of FTP-NEA bargaining proposals, ten elementary and two middle schools in Pinellas County were allowed to choose how their internal supplemental money was to be distributed. No restrictions were imposed, except that the faculty and administration had to agree on how the supplements were to be used if restructuring of funds was to take place. Eleven of twelve schools successfully negotiated agreements by reaching consensus on the best ways to use their internal supplemental money. By allowing schools the discretion to set their own priorities and address their particular needs, administrators, faculties, and students felt increased satisfaction with quality of their schools.

Because the 1987 pilot project was so successful, the FTP-NEA was able to get extra dollars this year for the special wish-lists of schools involved in the pilot program. Even more far-reaching is the "empowerment" capability contained in the 1988 contract, enabling all schools in Pinellas County to make decisions on site through negotiation and consensus. The freedom to reduce "top-down" imperatives has created an environment that supports responsibility, individual initiative, and creativity among staff and students.

Contact Persons: Dr. Howard Hinesley, Associate Superintendent, Pinellas County Public Schools, (813)462-9698; Courtney Vanderstack, Associate Executive Director, Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association, (813)585-6518

Leon County's Mentor Teacher Program for Elementary Science and Mathematics Teaching

In Leon County, the Mentor Teacher Program for Elementary Science and Math Teaching is generating a great deal of enthusiasm for science and math among both teachers and students. The program grew out of a number of related observations. Studies show that most elementary students - especially females and minorities - demonstrate both a loss of interest and a loss of achievement in science and math at relatively young ages. In response, the program set out to provide teachers with the sort of information, reinforcement, time, and resources needed to revitalize elementary science and math instruction. The program represents the collaboration of the Florida Department of Education, the Florida State University, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, and the Leon County School District.

The Mentor Teacher Program is designed to use successful teachers of elementary science and math to educate colleagues in the school setting. The program attempts to provide teachers with the information, reinforcement, time, resources, and support needed to revitalize elementary science and math instruction. According to Dr. Ken Tobin, the key ingredients of the program are learning by doing, reflecting on what is being done, sharing with colleagues, and knowing where to go for help. In addition, the program acknowledges that teachers, like others, "change and learn by doing...and change takes time."

At each of the five pilot schools in the project, teams of two exemplary teachers and the school principal attended a four-week summer program at Florida State University (FSU). There they received training in both mentoring and specific science and math activities. The teams then worked individually, developing projects for their schools with the assistance of FSU faculty and graduate students. At the start of the school year, the "mentor teachers" involved in the project assumed leadership for enhancing science and math instruction in their schools. Mentor teachers invited colleagues to observe model lessons, helped them to plan and implement similar curricula, coordinated a schedule to allow teachers to observe one another teach, and arranged faculty meetings to discuss successes and problems. Teachers were given access to the "Science Helper": a CD-ROM disc that permits instant access to one thousand hands-on science/math activities. They were also exposed to the AIMS program: a project utilizing hands-on, high interest curricula to integrate math and science lessons.

Principals provided support for innovations and, in some cases, participated in instruction. Team members were aware of the importance of some of the more intangible prerequisites for success. Principal Zaheerah Shakir sought out teachers who demonstrated the qualities of good mentors. In addition, reflection was stressed as a major component of the process. In the words of teacher Jeanette Pittman, "Being a mentor teacher really brought me to the mirror," in reflecting on her own strengths and weaknesses in science and math instruction.

The Mentor Teacher Program is a fresh approach to teacher enhancement and professional development. It draws on the experience and knowledge of exemplary teachers as the essential resource in revitalizing a critical subject area. Though participating, teachers are paid a stipend for the additional time and work required by the project; they report that the rewards of the program are many. The Mentor Teacher Program provides strong incentives for teachers to work together in improving schools.

Contact Person: Dr. Ken Tobin, Professor, Florida State University, (904) 644-2792.

Pasco County's Collegial Coach Training Program

The Collegial Coach Training Program is the delivery system for Pasco County's Teacher Assessment System, itself part of a concerted effort to review and enhance all aspects of teacher development in Pasco County. Initiated in 1986, the Teacher Assessment System (TAS) involves all 2000 teachers in the district and is based on the belief that teachers themselves are integral to determining their own development. The assessment process includes the essential competencies expected of all teachers in Pasco County; these competencies are the basis of training, observation, and improvement of teacher behaviors.

The TAS utilizes a self-evaluation inventory composed of sixty major competencies deemed critical to good teaching by a committee of teachers, principals, and administrators. In August 1988, twelve Collegial Coach Trainers designed and presented the TAS training to eighty collegial coaches representing all schools and certain districtwide employee groups. The two collegial coaches chosen from each school in the district receive a $300 one-year stipend for attending the training and subsequently training teachers at their school site in the use of the inventory. The collegial coaches also assist their peers in writing individual objectives for the year. In this way, teachers are encouraged to establish their own priorities for personal and instructional development. The collegial coaches serve as on-site resource persons for the teachers at their schools. Teachers who are unsure about the extent to which they demonstrate particular competencies can also request the assistance of an administrator or principal. When requested by teachers, collegial coaches are available to provide coaching and feedback throughout the year as well.

Because the collegial coach role was perceived as a very positive one, there were many applicants for the positions. Coaches were chosen by the school principals and appropriate district staff based on previous training, coaching, and supervisory experience. Coaches receive five days of training during the summer, covering such areas as the use of the Assessment System, strategies in training and overcoming resistances, and observation and feedback skills. According to Superintendent Thomas Weightman, training is a high priority of the program and is the only means for effectively implementing a system with such great potential for substantive staff development.

Contact Person: Ruth Biggs, Supervisor of Staff Development, Pasco County Public Schools, (813)996-1258

Dade County's Academy for the Teaching Arts

The Dade Academy for the Teaching Arts (DATA) was established in August 1987 as a joint project of Dade County Public Schools Bureau of Professionalization Programs and Operations and the United Teachers of Dade (UTD). A nine-week program of seminars and clinics run and operated exclusively by teachers, DATA is designed to stimulate professional growth among experienced teachers. As an outgrowth of the movement to professionalize teaching in Dade County, DATA enables teachers to conduct research projects, develop teaching units, and share teaching strategies to stimulate growth and personal creativity. The plan for DATA evolved over two years, calling for the efforts of teachers, union representatives, management, assistant principals, and principals. Its underlying premise is that teachers are best qualified to teach their colleagues.

DATA is part of an ongoing effort between Dade County Public Schools (DCPS) and UTD to improve the quality of instruction by establishing a career-advancement plan based upon superior performance, economic and non-monetary incentives, and professional growth and development. It provides its participants with the opportunity for interaction with other professionals, exposure to the latest educational research, and expanded professional horizons. Participation is currently limited to secondary high school teachers in the areas of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, foreign language, and exceptional education (LD/VE) who meet application requirements. However, according to DATA Director Evelyn Campbell, a task force is now working to establish middle and elementary school programs. A grant for this purpose has been received from corporate sponsor Bell South.

DATA operates within the context of the DCPS system and is housed in two trailers at Miami Beach Senior High School (MBSHS). Ten "resident" teachers - experts in their respective disciplines - are imported to DATA from various public schools in the county to serve as facilitators and mentors to DATA participants. Resident teachers also act as part of the MBSHS faculty; they teach high school classes for three periods each day and serve as liaisons from DATA to MBSHS. More than just teaching well, residents must be able to break down the teaching experience in order to explain it and act as mentors to the twenty teachers known as "externs" who participate each nine weeks. The externs are chosen based in large part on their proposed projects for the nine weeks. During this time, externs conduct their research projects, develop teaching plans, trade teaching strategies, and typically become computer literate. Among the titles of completed projects are: "In Quest of Critical Thinking," "Activities to Make Algebra Come Alive," and "Solving Word Problems."

A cadre of carefully selected exemplary teachers known as "adjuncts," replaces the extern teachers at their school sites. Five days of the nine-week period are devoted to maximizing articulation between the DATA extern and adjunct teachers. Because DATA is not operated as a separate entity, but meshes with the MBSHS, all faculty are invited to attend DATA workshops and seminars as their schedules permit. DATA professional resources are also shared whenever possible.

By placing teachers in this intellectually stimulating environment, DATA provides good teachers with the opportunity to grow intellectually and recharge their batteries. As its participants attest, DATA works to energize and revitalize teachers as professionals. One DATA participant called it "a salvation for teachers." Another added: "The great strength and power of DATA is that it spreads the wealth and knowledge of teachers throughout the county."

Contact Person: Evelyn Campbell, Director, Dade Academy for the Teaching Arts, (305)532-0846

Lake County's Effective Teaching Center

Lake County's Effective Teaching Center began in 1985 as an outgrowth of the AFT's national Educational Research and Dissemination (ER&D) program. The ER&D program has three purposes: to further teachers' professional growth, to make teachers users of research, and to improve student achievement. These goals are accomplished by exposing teachers to up-to-the-minute research that is "translated" to make it more accessible and usable. At the Effective Teaching Center (ETC), teachers study "translated" research on effective teaching techniques and classroom management, then return what they have learned to their schools.

The ETC is the first of its kind in the nation; it is made possible through the cooperation of the Lake County Educational Association (LCEA) and the Lake County School Board (LCSB). A three-year, $100,000 grant from the Hilton Foundation enabled Lake County to establish the ETC. Now that this grant has expired, the program is continuing its fourth year through the joint support of the LCEA and the LCSB.

From a large pool of applicants, 120 teachers are chosen to be trained as Teacher Research Linkers (TRLs) to serve as trainers and workshop leaders for peers in their own schools. These TRLs receive in-service points toward re-certification upon completion of the training. Substitutes are arranged so that these teachers can leave their classrooms six times throughout the school year for one entire day. Instructed by a trained teacher, the group of 120 are exposed to a piece of educational research with important implications for classroom practice. The teachers learn how to approach the research to make it useful for themselves and decide how they will share it with their colleagues. At each of the six sessions, the teachers provide feedback on how the information covered in the previous session was used in their own and others' classrooms. In the three years of the program's existence, the responses of the 480 teachers who have completed the program have been overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic.

The ETC solves a very basic problem. All too often educational research is carried on at a university, which may use a school or a district as the basis for the research, but fail to make the results available in a way that schools can use easily. Instead, a research paper or a technical article is created for a journal, and the document is stored far from the school that generated it. The ETC seeks to make pertinent research available to teachers as a means of enhancing their professional development. Because the program is based on the belief that "knowledge is power," says ETC Director Diana Brown, "it works hand-in-hand with shared decision-making." In addition, the sharing component makes the ETC unique. Teachers share with each other what they have learned, thus enriching what they and other teachers have to bring to students in the classroom.

The LCEA attributes the success of the program in large part to the supportive involvement of the Superintendent and School Board who, along with the LCEA, have enabled the program to continue by picking up the costs. In addition, the training for teachers involved in the Teacher as Researcher Program contains all the components of a good inservice training, as identified in pertinent research. In the words of a participant; "This class has renewed my enthusiasm for teaching. In addition, I feel better organized and more effective. The biggest benefit received was that my students have progressed much further than I had hoped due to my new management techniques."

Contact Person: Gail Burry, President, Lake County Education Association, (904)787-2050

Alachua County's Teacher Assistance Program (ATAP)

The Alachua Teacher Assistance Program (ATAP) is a new approach to professional development based on an innovative model originating in Toledo, Ohio. The goal of the program is to provide on-going, comprehensive assistance to any teacher who wants it. Through a joint agreement between the local teachers union and the school board, a cadre of excellent, experienced "consulting teachers" assists and supports peers who are having difficulty in the classroom. Candidates for assistance take part in ATAP voluntarily. Principals may recommend a teacher for the program, but the choice to participate is left to the teacher in question. Even after entering ATAP, teachers may choose to withdraw at anytime; they are then subject to routine evaluation and documentation procedures.

ATAP begins with orientation information that goes to administrators, principals, media specialists, union representatives, and especially teachers. Faculty at each school elect one to three teachers to participate in the referral process as teacher spokespersons. These spokespersons must agree with the principal's recommendation before a teacher is referred to the district coordinating council composed of administrators, principals, and union representatives. The council coordinates screening and approval of consulting teachers, sets policies, and generally oversees the operation of the program. The council also helps to identify a consulting teacher to best fit the teacher recommended for assistance.

A consulting teacher is drawn from a pool of consulting teachers selected by the coordinating council. According to Program Supervisor Mary Jean Davis, a consulting teacher is "a peer who observes and plans collaboratively for improvement." Consulting teachers provide expertise and peer support, offer professional judgement about the identified teacher's performance, and recommend further action. The length of the consulting process varies, but most consulting teachers devote at least ten days of intense observation to identifying the problem and developing helping strategies. At that point, any number of interventions are possible, depending on the needs of the teacher experiencing difficulty. Unlike more traditional evaluation systems which are frequently "weeding out" procedures, the focus of this process is to help teachers overcome problems in the classroom.

Consulting teachers typically assist with classroom management, instructional techniques, and content knowledge. They may point out a deficiency, suggest a new teaching method, or demonstrate a sample lesson, but all interventions and results are documented in monthly and final summary reports. Consulting teachers receive $3,000 compensation for their first year as a consulting teacher, with the amount for any necessary continued assistance determined on a case-by-case basis. In addition, the district provides extensive training and support for consulting teachers who, like the teachers receiving assistance, may receive inservice points for their work.

At its core, ATAP is designed to be an assistance program. Its primary purpose is to provide peer support for a wide range of classroom problems. In in the process, consulting teachers gain through training in various helping skills. On another level, however, ATAP serves to enhance teaching as a profession by making teachers responsible for monitoring and dealing with unacceptable performance in the classroom.

Contact Person: Mary Jean Davis, Supervisor of Special Teacher Programs, Alachua County Public Schools, (904)336-3648.

Sumter County's Mastery in Learning Project

The Mastery in Learning Project is a NEA "school-based reform" program utilizing school-based decision-making to improve student achievement. Now entering its third year of involvement, Wildwood Middle School in Sumter County was one of only 27 schools across the U.S. chosen to participate in the project. Like other participating schools, a consensus of 75 percent of the school staff was required before taking on the Mastery in Learning Project.

The Mastery in Learning Project begins by asking schools to define the school conditions needed to increase each student's opportunity to achieve mastery in learning. First, a school profile is developed; it describes the student population, curriculum, school structure, and other conditions affecting student learning. Next, the entire school faculty cooperatively establishes priorities for teaching, learning, curriculum, and school climate using a faculty inventory and group process procedure. Once a goal is set, school staff are given access to state-of-the art research on school organization and improvement options through TRaK (Teaching Resources and Knowledge) - the Project's database. The final step in the process is implementing comprehensive change according to the improvement plan developed with the involvement of all interested parties - administration, faculty, parents, students, and community members.

At Wildwood Middle School, implementation of the project began with the school profile, which took three days and the help of FTP-NEA staff to complete. According to teacher and chairman of the steering committee Jeff Wright, the faculty were then asked "to imagine what kind of school they wanted." Originally, faculty focused on "at-risk" students who are likely to be retained at one or more grade levels. The school profile had revealed that, at the time the project began, more than half the student population had been retained at least once. With the assistance of an on-site consultant, school staff searched TRaK for relevant research and improvement scenarios. Gradually, the staff realized that the goal they had set out for themselves would entail more fundamental restructuring than first anticipated.

Rather than focusing on "mastery learning," the faculty began to think more broadly about how to "restructure the entire school environment to make conditions conducive to mastery." An entire year was devoted to planning, during which release time was available for research and reading. Because school staff were able to think through the problem and develop a well-grounded plan of action, and because the decisions were made at the school level by the persons who would implement the changes, there was significant ownership of and commitment to the plan. Research suggested that student instructional groupings be changed from across-the-board ability groupings to ability groupings for two periods a day and mixed groupings for the remainder of the day. In addition, the need for changes in other fundamental aspects of the school became apparent. Five working committees were developed in the areas of curriculum, school image, student attitudes, teacher expectations, and discipline. Input was received from parents, teachers, students, and administrators as the plan was developed and put into practice. This broad-based involvement represented success in itself. Even more importantly, the retention rate has been reduced, and 83 percent of the students have reported feeling more successful in school. The fundamental nature of the changes instituted at Wildwood Middle School represent "real restructuring...," says Wright, "The entire school is revitalized. It's really something to see."

Contact Person: Jeff Wright, Chairman of Mastery in Learning Steering Committee, (904)748-1510

Gadsden County's Writing to Read Program

The Writing to Read program was implemented in the Gadsden District as part of the Gadsden Demonstration Models' (GDM) curriculum development strategy. A six-year (1983-89) educational improvement program based in Quincy, Florida, the GDM program works with the Gadsden School District and area post-secondary institutions (FSU, FAMU, TCC) to develop, implement, and disseminate model educational improvement programs across Gadsden County. Targeting the key components of the educational system - organization, staff, curriculum, and community/business involvement - the GDM seeks system-wide change.

The Writing to Read program was piloted at two Gadsden Elementary schools during the Fall of 1986. Developed and distributed by IBM, Writing To Read (WTR) is a primary language arts program for kindergarten and first grade students. WTR utilizes state-of-the-art educational and technological advances in a uniquely effective approach to reading and writing instruction. Emphasizing a multisensory approach, WTR teaches students to use their inherent language skills to write what they can say and read what they have written. The program is designed to teach the 42 phonemes that represent the sounds of English speech; students are encouraged to express their own thoughts in writing using these phonemes. A variety of activities support this instructional goal.

During 1986-87 and 1987-88 , a total of 291 kindergarten and 293 first grade students participated in the WTR program at George W. Munroe Elementary school. At Gretna Elementary School, 160 kindergarten and 169 first grade students were involved. Currently, the WTR program involves 133 kindergarten and 164 first grade students at George W. Munroe and 72 kindergarten and 86 first grade students at Gretna Elementary.

Students work in the WTR lab for approximately one hour daily. A whole language approach is then used throughout the rest of the day. A variety of equipment is available in the lab, including IBM personal computers with speech synthesizers and various sorts of educationally relevant material organized into five learning centers: a computer station, a writing/typing station, a work journal station, a listening library, and a "make-words" station.

The benefits of the program extend to both students and teachers in this rural community. The reason, maintains teacher Susan Snowden, is that "the students' writing is based on their own experience." The inherent interest generated by this approach means that "everyone reads what they write...they are so proud and anxious to share their work." Students also collect their personal writing into "books" that go into the library and book stations, an activity that encourages reading. The WTR lab is characterized by teachers as "a very happy place." Children are learning in multisensory ways and becoming self-directed, active learners.

In addition, Superintendent Robert Bryant reports that attendance at Wildwood Middle is up, so much so that "the kids even come to school sick." Teachers have gained as well. Since the inception of the WTR program, teacher Bonnie Blitch maintains that she has become "a more creative, innovative teacher."

Preliminary evidence suggests that the WTR program is working for Gadsden County. WTR students are scoring above the district and national averages in math and language arts as measured by the CTBS

(Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills), a national norm reference test used to measure skills in math and language arts. Preliminary analysis of writing samples reveals that, in terms of effectiveness, WTR students do better than matched comparison students. Comprehensive databases are being established that will facilitate additional and longitudinal analysis of WTR/matched comparison group students.

Contact Person: Gerri Coggins, Director of Elementary Education, Gadsden County Public Schools, (904) 629-9651.

Florida Department of Education's Summer School Enhancement Institute

In the summer of 1988, the Summer School Enhancement Institute brought together teachers, curriculum specialists, assistant principals, and principals with a keen interest in improving their schools. Conceived of and managed by the Division of Human Resource Development of the Florida Department of Education, the Summer School Enhancement Institute was designed to provide assistance and training that would:

- enable over 100 school teams to develop action plans for shared school development;
- provide key concepts for the shared school development process;
- provide skill-building opportunities for initiating and managing school development; and
- enable schools to stimulate productive school work cultures.

The Institute emerged in response to a number of national trends - for one, the urgent call for schools that are more responsive to the needs of their students and communities. In addition, the team approach used during the Institute reflected the recent recognition that teachers must be "partners in renewal." (1988, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching) Most importantly, the experiences of school district around the country have made it apparent that state agencies can help facilitate the implementation of successful local programs by providing opportunities for systematic skill-building.

The theme of the Institute was "Journey Toward School Greatness," and it provided a rare chance for school personnel to spend more than just a few snatched minutes developing plans and ideas to make their schools better. Participants were organized into teams and taught to solve problems through a model of productive school management known as "Managing Productive Schools" (MPS). Created by Dr. Karolyn Snyder and Dr. Robert Anderson of the University of South Florida, MPS consists of ten competencies designed to stimulate the development of a productive school work culture.

During classroom instruction, participants worked in their school teams on such activities as identifying productive work patterns found in successful organizations, developing a vision of school excellence for their school sites, participating in collaborative decision-making to identify school issues and goals, learning to conduct productive group meetings and use effective communication skills, and learning different organizational analysis techniques to solve school problems. Teaching strategies most often included informal discussions, team planning, reflection, and direct instruction. The instructional delivery model was designed to facilitate competency through introduction/ readiness, concept development, demonstration, practice, feedback and reinforcement, and transfer.

Throughout the institute, teams were encouraged to develop a sense of community as well as a sense of purpose in their work, and they accomplished these feelings through songs, cheers, raps, and other arts-related activities. Subsequent evaluation of the Institute program, based on daily observations and remarks by school teams, revealed that participants viewed it as well-organized, focused, uniformly delivered - all in all, a rich and meaningful professional opportunity.

Contact Person: Ida Baker, Director, Division of Human Resource Development, (904) 488-5724